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ABSTRACT

This critical discussion of current trends in special education examines the current inclusive schools movement and compares it to the regular education initiative (REI). After contrasting the two movements' respective advocates, goals, tactics, and understanding of and links to general education, the paper argues that the field's rhetoric has become increasingly strident and its perspective has become increasingly insular and disassociated from general education's concerns. Especially noted is the disproportional influence in the inclusive schools movement of those concerned with individuals with severe intellectual disabilities (especially The Association for the Severely Handicapped) and their rejection of the concept of a continuum of placement options. Goals of the inclusionists are seen as focusing on abolishing special education and promoting social competence (in contrast to REI's emphasis on preventing academic failure and emphasizing academic standards and accountability). Special education is blamed by many in the inclusive schools movement as being responsible for general education's failure to accommodate diverse student needs. Believers in full inclusion are urged to put the specific needs of individual children first and to compromise with general education. However, a pessimistic prediction is proffered concerning the current movement's ability to forge a productive alliance with general education. (Contains 120 references.) (Author/DB)

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Inclusive Schools Movement and the Radicalization of Special Education Reform

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Running head: INCLUSIVE SCHOOLS

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Abstract

In this paper, we examine the inclusive schools movement and compare it to that of the REI. After contrasting the movements' respective advocates, goals, tactics, and understanding of and links to general education, we argue that the field's rhetoric has become increasingly strident; its perspective increasingly insular and disassociated from general education's concerns. We offer a rather pessimistic prediction about the current movement's success in forging a productive alliance with general education.

Inclusive Schools Movement and the Radicalization of Special Education Reform

In our neck of the woods, it is not unusual for an elementary resource teacher to be saddled with a caseload of 75 students, a far cry from the maximum of 15 students recommended by Lilly (1977). Similar situations hold in many school districts across the U.S. (e.g., U.S. Department of Education, 1986; Algozzine, Christenson, & Ysseldyke, 1982). Critics like Wang and Walberg (1988) see this as evidence that the leadership in special education is more interested in empire building than effective teaching: more students eventually lead to more teachers, which, in turn, engender more programs, dollars, and power for special education. Those with a somewhat more benign view explain the field's heavy caseloads and high pupil-teacher ratios in terms of special educators' presumed bleeding-heart, statue-of-liberty ("Give us your tired and weary...") mentality. Regardless of the motives imputed, an increasingly obvious fact is that crowded classrooms in many places are making a mockery of special education's historic and noble intent to differentiate (and enhance) instruction for students with disabilities.

Moreover, faced with this and other problems bedeviling its programs, special education appears unable or unwilling to help itself. After all, many reform strategies have been promulagated in white papers, and exhortations and admonishments have been offered by blue-ribbon committees -- but little has changed. Whereas this inaction (some would say paralysis) might be explained in terms of widespread complacency or weak leadership, critics argue that even if the field were to become a whirling dervish of activity, its reform making would fail because of a fundamentally incorrect conception of itself, a self-image warped by its own success. Specifically, as special education has

grown pell-mell in the past two decades, it has evolved into a second system (Wang, Reynolds, & Walberg, 1988) complete with its own teachers, administrators, credentialling process, programs, and budgets. At the same time, it has developed a sense of independence and autonomy (some would say hubris), a penchant for doing things unilaterally even when issues and problems seem to demand bilateral action. Special education's failure to mend itself, say the critics, is due partly to its organizational, physical, and psychological separation from the source of its problems -- general education (e.g., Skrtic, 1987).

Balderdash, say others. Writing in support of a strong independent special education, Braaten, Kauffman, Braaten, Polsgrove, and Nelson (1988), Hallahan, Keller, McKinney, Lloyd, and Bryan (1988), Kauffman (1989), Kauffman, Gerber, and Semmel (1988), Keogh (1988a, 1988b), Megivern (1987), Singer (1988), Vergason and Anderegg (1989), and Walker and Bullis (1991) claim regular education cannot be trusted always to respect the needs of special needs children. Evidence from surveys of parents of students with disabilities (Harris cited in Kauffman, 1991) and recent policy statements from several special and general education professional organizations (e.g., Learning Disabilities Association, 1993; the Council for Exceptional Children, 1993; The Commission on the Education of the Deaf, 1988; National Education Association, 1992) also indicate support for a multi-faceted special education system. Nonetheless, recognition grows that a meaningful connection with general education is necessary; that a "Lone Ranger" strategy for special education is self-defeating. More and more special educators are resonating to a view first expressed by Dunn (1968) more than 25 years ago. To wit: Special education is not a Nantucket or Martha's Vineyard, but a town on the mainland, and its students and teachers are better served when its business is

closely coordinated with mainland business (see Behrmann, 1992; Hales & Carlson, 1992).

Applied to special education's high pupil-teacher ratios, this recrudescent Dunnian view holds that the problem is caused by general education's lack of will and capacity to accommodate all of its students. General education must be fortified through fundamental changes in its teaching and learning processes. It must draw on the talents and energies of building-based special educators, Chapter 1 and bilingual teachers, and other professionals working with general educators to fashion a smarter, more supple, coordinated school program responsive to fast and slow learners alike. According to this view, only when all teachers are working in tandem will general education become sufficiently competent and confident to grant special educators small enough caseloads so they may work intensively with most-deserving students.

But how likely is this partnership? During the 1980s, REI proponents tried to interest general education in special education concerns. As documented by Pugach and Sapon-Shevin (1987), general education took little notice, prompting Lieberman (1985) to quip that general education was like the uninvited bride for a wedding thrown together by special educators. And whereas REI-inspired activity in the 1980s changed special education in places like Utah (Kukic, 1993) and Vermont (Thousand & Villa, 1990), such reform making tended to parallel rather than converge with general education's renewal efforts (McLaughlin & Warren, 1992; Miller, 1990; Pugach & Sapon-Shevin, 1987).

The rallying cry today is "inclusive schools," but the basic question remains: How likely is this new movement to bring special and general education into synergistic alignment? Some are optimistic. They point to

much publicized position papers of the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (cited in The Association for Persons with Severe Handicaps newsletter, 1992), Council of Chief State School Officers (1992), and National Association of State Boards of Education (1992) as evidence that general education appears more interested in special education now than 5 years ago. But as general education finally may be turning an ear, special education's reformist message is changing. In this paper we examine inclusive school proposals and compare them to those of the REI. After contrasting the movements' respective advocates, goals, tactics, and understanding of and links to general education, we argue that the field's rhetoric has become increasingly strident; its perspective increasingly insular and disassociated from general education's concerns. We offer a rather pessimistic prediction about the current movement's success in forging a productive alliance with general education.

Before going further, it is important to make clear that by focusing on the REI and the inclusive schools movement, this paper ignores an important part of the special education reform story; namely, the opposition. Readers should remember that many in special education, perhaps a majority, hold reservations about many of the principles and ideas discussed below.

The REI

Who Were the Advocates?

"High-incidence" group. It is not often recognized that two distinct groups advocated for the REI. The larger of the two included those with interest in students with learning disabilities, behavior disorders, and "mild/moderate" mental retardation (e.g., Algozzine, Maheady, Sacca, O'Shea, & O'Shea, 1990; Gersten & Woodward, 1990; Gottlieb, Alter, & Gottlieb, 1991; Jenkins, Pious, & Peterson, 1988; Lilly, 1987; Pugach & Lilly, 1984; Reynolds,

1988, 1989, 1991), the so-called "high-incidence" group of students. This first group also included non-special educators like Wang (e.g., Wang, Rubenstein, & Reynolds, 1985), McGill-Franzen (1987), and Slavin (e.g., Braddock & Slavin, 1992; Madden & Slavin, 1983; Slavin et al., 1991), who approached special education reform from the perspective of advocacy for nondisabled at-risk students. At least two characteristics united these REI supporters: first, a willingness to offer a no-holds-barred critique of special education; second, a belief that the field must recognize that it is part of a larger system, not a separate order; that it must coordinate and collaborate with general education (e.g., Allington & McGill-Franzen, 1989), and that a stronger general education means a stronger special education.

"Low-incidence" group. The second group of REI proponents consisted of advocates for students with severe intellectual disabilities (e.g., Biklen, 1985; Biklen, Lehr, Searl, & Taylor, 1987; S. Stainback & W. Stainback, 1985; Snell, 1988). Members of this second group and the first group sometimes coordinated similar-sounding critiques of special education, and even met on occasion to coordinate tactics. One such meeting took place on December 6, 1988, at Temple University. Nevertheless, the rather exclusive concern of the second group was to help integrate children with severe intellectual disabilities into neighborhood schools. The positions of some seemed synchronous with the view expressed by Allington and McGill-Franzen that special education should coordinate and collaborate with general education (e.g., Gartner & Lipsky, 1987; S. Stainback & W. Stainback, 1985; W. Stainback & S. Stainback, 1984); others, however, argued against the moderation implicit in such a position, choosing instead to push for the elimination of special education altogether (e.g., Taylor, 1988).

This rather disparate, "low-incidence" group proceeded parallel to,

rather than under the banner of, the REI. Most were not enthusiastic supporters because they saw it as a policy initiative for children with "high incidence" disabilities. Nevertheless, they gave it their tacit approval because its goals, while different from their own, meshed with their overall strategy. They understood that the central issue for Reynolds, Wang, and others was to achieve a restructuring whereby most students with mild and moderate disabilities would be transferred on a full-time basis to mainstream settings. By contrast, during the middle to late 1980s, most members of their own group were thinking "neighborhood schools," not "mainstream" (e.g., Biklen, 1985; W. Stainback & S. Stainback, 1984; S. Stainback & W. Stainback, 1985). Thus, the "low-incidence" group's strategy appeared to be, "Let the REI folks get the 'high-incidence' students into the mainstream. This will make room for our children in self-contained and resource settings in the neighborhood school."

REI leadership. Those speaking for students with "high-incidence" disabilities set the goals for the movement and the tone of the debate. There were several reasons for this. First, as Assistant Secretary of Education, Will (1986) wrote an influential paper that focused on children with mild and moderate disabilities; second, Reynolds and Wang assumed high-profile roles; third, Wang enjoyed a relatively close professional relationship with Will; and fourth, the low-incidence group viewed the REI as a secondary concern.

Goals: Restructuring and Large-Scale Mainstreaming

REI leaders had several distinguishable goals. The first was to merge special and general education into one inclusive system. Although some proponents objected to the term "merger," preferring phrases like "shared responsibilities" and "inclusive educational arrangements" (Wang & Walberg, 1988, p. 128), they in fact were describing a fundamental restructuring of the

relationship between general and special education. This reconfiguration would unite a balkanized education system. It also would circumvent the need for an eligibility process that purportedly depends on invalid test instruments and psychologically harmful labels, only to pigeonhole children into educationally questionable classifications (e.g., Algozzine & Ysseldyke, 1981; Epps, Ysseldyke, & Algozzine, 1983; Reynolds, Wang, & Walberg, 1987; Reynolds, Zetlin, & Wang, 1993; Wang & Walberg, 1988; Ysseldyke, 1987; Ysseldyke, Algozzine, & Epps, 1983).

The second goal was to increase dramatically the number of children with disabilities in mainstream classrooms by use of large-scale, full-time mainstreaming (e.g., Slavin & Stevens, 1991; Wang & Birch, 1984) as opposed to the more traditional case-by-case approach (e.g., Anderson-Inman, Walker, & Purcell, 1984; Brown et al., 1979; Fuchs, Fuchs, & Fernstrom, 1993). And the third goal, implicit in the first two, was to strengthen the academic achievement of students with mild and moderate disabilities, as well as that of underachievers without disabilities. To wit: "Local schools should be encouraged to experiment and evaluate the effectiveness of a variety of educational approaches in solving the widespread persistent problem of how to achieve more productive learning for all students" (Wang, 1987, p. 27).

Tactics

REI supporters generated a handful of tactics to restructure the special education-general education relationship and to move greater numbers of students with disabilities into mainstream classrooms. Some of these strategies were downright ingenious, others irritatingly vague or inconsistent. Several were cleverly aimed to win REI leaders favor within special and general education communities.

Waivers for restructuring. Waivers constituted a principal means of

realizing a merger. Waivers from state and federal rules and regulations were sought, granting school districts increased flexibility to use special education resources in different, and presumably more imaginative and adaptive, ways (e.g., Reynolds, Wang, & Walberg, 1987; Wang & Reynolds, 1985). For example, a district might ask for a waiver to lower special educators' direct-service caseloads with no corresponding decrease in the reimbursement it received from its state department of education. With fewer children to serve in resource rooms, the special educators would be expected to spend more time in the mainstream working with general educators and helping not just mainstreamed students with disabilities but non-disabled underachievers, too. In return for such waivers, REI supporters promised accountability to determine the effectiveness of the new administrative arrangements and professional roles engendered by them. Reynolds, Wang, and Walberg (1987) called this quid pro quo, "waivers for performance" (p. 394).

Modifying the continuum. Another tactic for achieving a special education-general education merger, as well as for instigating more aggressive forms of mainstreaming, was to modify the nature of the continuum of services. Many suggestions were advanced in this vein. Sometimes the same individuals advocated different and conflicting solutions. Wang and Reynolds (1985), for example, proposed a form of merger and greater mainstreaming with no change in the existing continuum of services: "Funding formulae should support a full continuum of services" (p. 501). At other points, however, their plans indicated an opposite strategy, as when Wang (1981) called for an elimination of the entire continuum: "The term 'mainstreaming' is used here to mean the integration of regular and exceptional children in a school setting where all children share the same resources and opportunities for learning on a full-time basis" (p. 196, emphasis added).

Yet another solution called for an elimination of the bottom of the continuum; that is, closing residential and day schools. Children in these settings would move into self-contained classes and resource rooms in neighborhood schools, while the children previously served in these settings would be mainstreamed (Reynolds, 1989). And, finally, it was proposed that mainstreaming should be accomplished by eliminating, not the bottom, but the near-top of the continuum of services (i.e., resource and self-contained classes). Wang's Adaptive Learning Environments Model (ALEM), for example, was developed to replace pullout in regular schools, especially resource rooms and compensatory education programs (e.g., Wang & Birch, 1984). Similarly, Reynolds, Wang, and Walberg (1987) stated: "Our remarks [about reform] refer to programs for 'mildly' or 'judgmentally' handicapped children...but not to programs for children who are deaf, blind, severely disturbed, or deeply retarded in cognitive development" (p. 391). This wide swing in choice of strategies, and differing views of the viability of the continuum, caused considerable confusion. It gave some REI supporters a chameleon-like quality, which reinforced critics' fears that REI proponents wanted dramatic change without a carefully conceptualized blueprint (e.g., McKinney & Hocutt, 1988).

Large-scale mainstreaming. REI backers advocated two basic ways of transforming general education classrooms into more academically and socially responsive settings for most students with disabilities. The first was to individualize instruction for all students, illustrated by the ALEM. The second was cooperative learning, operationalized in several ways by researchers at Johns Hopkins (e.g., Slavin & Stevens, 1991) and elsewhere. Whereas a number of differences separate these two classroom reorganization strategies, both claim a strong academic focus. The ALEM's overall goal, for example, is to "provide effective school environments that maximize the

outcomes of learning for individual children -- environments where each child can effectively master basic skills in academic subjects...while becoming confident in his or her ability to learn and to cope with the social and physical classroom" (Wang, 1980, p. 126). Cooperative learning methods are defined by Slavin and Stevens (1991) as "instructional techniques in which students work in heterogeneous learning teams to help one another learn academic material" (p. 177).

In addition, both large-scale mainstreaming strategies depend on extant curricula, either chosen by the teacher (ALEM) or by the developers (Johns Hopkins), and they are directive. For example, the ALEM includes a prescriptive learning component that comprises a series of hierarchically organized curricula for basic skills development; a more open-ended exploratory learning component; and classroom management procedures to facilitate implementation of the prescriptive and exploratory components (see Wang, 1980). Slavin and colleagues' Team-Assisted Individualization (TAI) combines programmed mathematics instruction with cooperative learning. TAI's principal features include teams, placement tests, curriculum materials, teaching groups, team study methods, team scores and team recognition procedures, facts tests, and whole-class units (see Slavin & Stevens, 1991). The curricular focus and prescriptive nature of these mainstreaming strategies are points to which we will return when we discuss full-inclusionists' approaches to restructuring.

The big tent. REI leaders recognized the importance of building bridges to various constituencies, of developing broad-based support for REI ideas and proposals. They were loathe, for example, to alienate special education's teachers and administrators. Despite calls for waivers, modifications of the continuum of services, and a reorganization of mainstream classrooms, most REI

leaders did not advocate an end to special education. "The REI," wrote Wang and Walberg (1988), "is not aimed at eliminating or subordinating special education services" (p. 23, emphasis in original). REI-inspired reforms usually were explicit about a role -- albeit a different role -- for special educators: "We need to move special teachers [of students with mild disabilities] into mainstream structures as co-teachers with general teaching staff where both groups share in the instruction. The special education teachers can...lead in such matters as child study, working with parents, and offering individualized, highly intensive instruction to students who have not been progressing well..." (Reynolds, 1989, p. 10).

There was equal interest in courting those in higher education and elsewhere who argued that reforms must be based partly on data and accountability. To make waivers and large-scale mainstreaming more credible, REI supporters appealed to federal officials for monies to underwrite efforts by the special and general education research communities to develop mainstream instructional environments more responsive to greater student diversity. Although some may have doubted the sincerity of these calls for experimentation, REI proponents nevertheless went on record both as supporting a data-driven reform effort and as admitting that no one had the proverbial silver-bullet solution (Wang, Rubenstein, & Reynolds, 1985). They also tried (unsuccessfully) to organize a pooling of data on experimental programs at the the Office of Special Education Programs/Council for Exceptional Children's jointly sponsored Project Directors' Meeting in Summer, 1988, and to undertake (successfully) an ambitious compilation of reviews of the literature on the conceptual and empirical validity of special education (see Wang, Reynolds, & Walberg, 1987).

Impact on Special and General Education Reform

One would have thought REI goals to be attractive to the leaders of general education reform. REI supporters' intention to strengthen regular classrooms' teaching and learning processes by an infusion of special education resources, thereby making such settings more responsive to student diversity, seemed consonant with, if not inspired by, reports from the Carnegie Council for Adolescent Development (1989), Carnegie Forum on Education and the Economy (1986), Holmes Group (1986), National Commission on Excellence in Education (1983), and National Governors' Association (1986). But, as mentioned, general education was uninterested in the REI (Pugach & Sapon-Shevin, 1987; Lieberman, 1985; McLaughlin & Warren, n.d.; National Council on Disability, 1989). Perhaps this was because special education was viewed nationally as a separate concern. Maybe it was due to general educators' greater interest in excellence than equity (National Council on Disability, 1989; Sapon-Shevin, 1987). In any case, at its most effective the REI was a special education initiative. In Colorado, Pennsylvania, Utah, and Washington special education was reorganized at the state or local levels, but with little concomitant change in general education programs like Chapter 1, or with respect to issues like personnel preparation. Exceptions to this may be Vermont and Kentucky (McLaughlin, 1993).

Inclusive Schools Movement

Increasingly, special education reform is symbolized by the term "inclusive schools." Like the REI, which grabbed the field's attention nearly a decade ago, the newer term seems to defy straightforward interpretation. And like the REI, this is partly because "inclusion" means different things to people who wish different things from it. For the group that wants least, it

is a trendy form of hocus-pocus, old wine in a new bottle, a subtle form of co-option to maintain the status quo. To those who want more, it means decentralization of power and the concomitant empowerment of teachers and building-level administrators; a fundamental reorganization of the teaching and learning process through innovations like cooperative learning and thematic teaching; and the redefinition of professional relationships within buildings (e.g., Council for Exceptional Children, 1993; The Board of Education for the City of Toronto, 1989). Such objectives are neither dissimilar from those of the REI already described, nor inherently inimical to special education or its continuum of services. (See McLaughlin & Warren's [1992] description of inclusive schools, pp. 34-37.) But to yet a third group, those who currently lead the inclusive schools movement, "special education reform" is an oxymoron: No meaningful transformation can occur unless and until special education and its continuum of placements are eliminated altogether. The "inclusive school" denotes a place rid of special educators, where full inclusion reigns.

Who Are the Advocates?

TASH takes control. In the last several years, there has been an important change in leadership of the special education reform movement, a rather abrupt replacement of the heterogeneous, special education-general education, "high-incidence/low-incidence" crowd, with a more insular group primarily concerned about the rights and well-being of children and adults with severe intellectual disabilities. How did this come about? First, many REI supporters became disillusioned and devitalized by general education's obvious lack of interest in special education, and by many special education organizations' hostility, often masked by an official neutrality. Second, and related, these special education organizations were slow to take a stand on

reform, and remained on the periphery of the policy skirmishes. Not so the leadership of The Association of Persons with Severe Handicaps (TASH). With the energy and passion of true believers, they took the field by storm; they rushed into a vacuum created by others' inaction, no doubt intimidating by their vigor alone many who may have disagreed with their radical message.

TASH spokespersons, in alliance with some parents of children and adults with severe intellectual disabilities, are disciplined, well organized, articulate, and politically connected. They tend to focus on a single issue, identify with a precisely defined constituency, and use rhetoric effectively. Their inspiration is the "normalization principle," defined by Nirje as "making available to the mentally retarded patterns and conditions of everyday life which are as close as possible to the norms and patterns of the mainstream society" (cited by Biklen, 1985, p. 6). Their faith and optimism are obvious. Both seem based on a presumed historical imperative that "the whole history of education can be told in terms of one steady trend that can be described as progressive inclusion" (Reynolds & Birch, 1977, p. 22).

And there can be no doubt about TASH's profound impact on the policy environment. Its positions have influenced special education policy in New Mexico (New Mexico State Department of Education, 1991), Michigan (Michigan Department of Education, 1992), and a handful of other states. Its imprint may be seen on recent special education-related statements made by such powerful groups as the Council of Chief State School Officers (1992) and the National Association of School Boards of Education (1992). Directly or indirectly, it helped shape several of the Office of Special Education Programs' funding initiatives, such as the technical assistance the agency underwrites states to help integrate students with severe disabilities (California Research Institute, 1990). And its activity was an important

catalyst in the formation of the Council for Exceptional Children's President's Panel on Special Education Reform and Integration, which drafted a statement on inclusive schools that was ratified during the 1993 convention in San Antonio.

Full inclusionists also have attracted major media attention. In April, 1993, "Educating Peter" won the year's Academy Award for Best Achievement in Documentary Short Subjects. The half-hour film captures the challenges and rewards of including Peter Gwazdauskas, a 10-year old with Down syndrome, in a third-grade classroom at the Gilbert Linkous Elementary School in Blacksburg, Virginia. In accepting the award on national TV, the film's co-producer, Gerardine Wurzburg, concluded with, "I'd like to say for the advocates of full inclusion for people with disabilities in our society, let us please move forward." "Educating Peter" aired nationwide on HBO five times between May 11 and May 27, 1993. And on May 19, 1993, the New York Times ran a front-page story entitled, "When disabled students enter regular classrooms" (see Chira, 1993).

Reformist rhetoric hardens. As the TASH leadership seized control of the reform movement, prevalent reformist opinion about special education and the continuum of services made an important sea change; that is, from a belief in the desirability of placement options, represented by the continuum, to the view that the continuum has outlived its usefulness and should be eliminated. This radical transformation was reflected in the changing rhetoric of several visible advocates of inclusion. In the mid-1980s, the Stainbacks favored special education options in home schools: "While heterogeneous educational arrangements should be encouraged wherever possible, students would still need to be grouped, in some instances, into specific courses or classes according to their instructional needs" (W. Stainback & S. Stainback, 1984, p. 108).

Seven years later, the same authors argued for the elimination of the continuum: "An inclusive school or classroom educates all students in the mainstream. No students, including those with disabilities, are relegated to the fringes of the school by placement in segregated wings, trailers, or special classes" (S. Stainback & W. Stainback, 1992, p. 34).

Gartner and Lipsky have demonstrated a similar transmutation. In the late 1980s, they defined integration for students with severe disabilities partly as "placement of [special] classes in general school buildings which are the chronologically age-appropriate sites for the students" and "participation...in all non-academic activities of the school" and "implementation of a functional life-skills curriculum" (1987, p. 386). Five years later, they wrote, "The concepts of Least Restrictive Environment -- a continuum of placements, and a cascade of services -- were progressive when developed but do not today promote the full inclusion of all persons with disabilities in all aspects of societal life" (Lipsky & Gartner, 1991, p. 52, emphasis in original).

On behalf of whom do TASH leaders speak? The TASH leadership presumes to speak for all students with disabilities. But its position differs markedly from the official views of many advocacy and professional groups, evidenced by the recent position statements of the Council for Exceptional Children (1993), the Commission on the Education of the Deaf (1988), a consortium of national organizations of the blind (American Council on the Blind, n.d.), Learning Disabilities Association (1993), and the National Joint Committee on Learning Disabilities (1993). Nor does the TASH leadership necessarily represent the views of all or even many members of its own organization. This possiblity is suggested by W. Stainback, S. Stainback, and Moravec's (1992) forceful rejection of Brown and colleagues' (1991) carefully reasoned position that

students with severe intellectual disabilities should spend some time outside general education classrooms. In other words, the TASH leadership, although enjoying considerable success in shaping state and national policy, represents a small and insular group of individuals -- smaller and considerably more homogeneous than the REI supporters of 5 to 10 years ago.

Goals: Abolishing Special Education and Promoting Social Competence

Eliminating the continuum of services. Biklen (1985), Biklen, Lehr, Searl, and Taylor (1987), Giangreco, Dennis, Cloninger, Edelman, and Schattman (1993), Lipsky and Gartner (1989, 1991), W. Stainback and S. Stainback (1991), S. Stainback and W. Stainback (1992), Taylor (1988), Thousand and Villa (1990), York and Vandercook (1991) and other leaders of the inclusive schools movement are attempting to deconstruct special education on two levels: to demythologize the construct of "special education" and to raze its organization and structure, ridding the education landscape of professionals called "special educators." That is, some wish to eliminate not just the very bottom or near-top of the cascade, as advocated by REI suporters (e.g., Gersten & Woodward, 1990; Jenkins, Pious, & Peterson, 1988; Pugach & Lilly, 1984; Reynolds, Wang, & Walberg, 1987), but virtually the entire range of options represented by the continuum.

Proponents of sacking the continuum are quick to point out that, whereas they wish to see an end to special education teachers and students, they are not advocating "dumping," or moving children with disabilities into general education classrooms without appropriate support. Specialists of all types, they say, would follow the children into the mainstream where services would be available to any student, previously labeled or not, who may be in need.

Focus on social competence and friendships. Whereas the first goal of many inclusionists is to abolish special education, a second is to enhance

students' social competence and to change the attitudes of teachers and nonhandicapped students who, some day, will become parents, taxpayers, and service providers (e.g., Gartner & Lipsky, 1987; S. Stainback & W. Stainback, 1985). Although the first goal has received the publicity, it is the second that is the advocates' end goal. As explained by Gartner and Lipsky (1987): "The rationale for educating students with severe disabilities in integrated settings is to ensure their normalized community participation by providing them with systematic instruction in the skills that are essential to their success in the social and evnironmental contexts in which they will ultimately use these skills" (p. 386). Snell (1991) states, "Probably the three most important and reciprocal benefits from integration...are (a) the development of social skills...across all school age groups, (b) the improvements in the attitudes that non-disabled peers have for their peers with disabilities, and (c) the development of positive relationships and friendships between peers as a result of integration" (pp. 137-138). (Also see Vandercook, Fleetham, Sinclair, & Tettie, cited in W. Stainback & S. Stainback, 1991.)

In sharp contrast to this focalization on socialization skills, attitude change, and positive peer relations was the REI advocates' primary concern of strengthening the academic performance of students at risk for school failure. Put another way, whereas full inclusionists would appear to measure integration success in terms of social acceptance, REI proponents' bottom line tended to index academic competence/success. This reflects the fact that whereas full inclusionists advocate primarily for children with severe intellectual disabilities, REI supporters were often working on behalf of students for whom relatively ambitious academic goals had been established (Fuchs & Fuchs, 1991).

Tactics

Full inclusion. Why do leaders of the inclusive schools movement adhere to the uncompromising position of no special education and all children with disabilities in regular classrooms? Quite simply because special education, Chapter 1, and other categorical programs are viewed collectively as a root cause of much that is wrong with general education. Why? "Because...'special' education has operated for so long, many schools unfortunately do not know...how to adapt and modify the curriculum and instructional programs to meet diverse student needs" (S. Stainback & W. Stainback, 1992, p. 40). To at least some full inclusionists, then, special education's very existence is responsible for general education's failure to accommodate the needs of many students because it has been a "dumping ground" that has made it easy for general education to rid itself of its "undesirables" and "unteachables." Moreover, critics contend, if providing the mainstream with a dumping ground were not complicity enough, special education's tendency to locate students' learning and behavior problems within the child (see S. Stainback & W. Stainback, 1992, p. 32) has absolved general educators of any responsibility for the children they have removed from their system. Eliminating special education, say the inclusionists, will force general educators both to deal with the children with whom it heretofore avoided dealing and, in the process, to transform itself into a more responsive, resourceful, humane system.

Lieberman (1992) and others have noted similarities between the policies of full inclusion and the deinstitutionalization of persons with mental illness. According to a study conducted by the Public Citizen Health Research Group and the National Alliance for the Mentally Ill (cited in Hilts, 1990),

deinstitutionalization has caused more than 250,000 people with schizophrenia or manic-depressive illness to live in shelters, on the streets, or in jails. Begun in the 1960s, its failure became so obvious, pervasive, and devastating that Seymour Kaplan, the late psychiatrist who pioneered the movement in New York State, was often heard to remark that it was the gravest error he had ever made (Sacks, 1991).

Deinstitutionalization's failure (also see Bachrach, 1986) prompts this question: Why do full inclusionists believe general education can respond appropriately to all students heretofore receiving special education, Chapter 1, and ESL instruction? How can the mainstream improve so dramatically to incorporate an increase in diversity when it has such obvious difficulty accommodating the student diversity it already has? The infusion of specialists, bought with dollars saved from the dismantling of special education, would be a start, but nearly all agree it would be only a start. Fundamental changes in mainstream classes would seem necessary. And some full inclusionists believe they have the answer. Their solution reveals how poorly they understand general education and how shaky is the ground on which their movement is being built.

Open-school revival. Many an inclusionist's vision of restructured schooling prominently features a deemphasis, if not the outright rejection, of standard curricula (see S. Stainback & W. Stainback, 1992). W. Stainback, S. Stainback, and Moravec (1992), for example, offer three reasons for their dislike of standard or "predefined" curricula. First, they claim, there is no intellectual basis for textbook knowledge: "There is no longer (if there ever was) a single, discrete, staynant [sic] body of information" (p. 69). Second, the standard curriculum "does not accommodate the inherent diversity in background experiences, learning needs, styles, and interests of all students"

(p. 69). Third, it and related instruction are "boring, uninteresting, and lacking in meaning or purposefulness for many students" (p. 69).

There is a less explicit reason for this antipathy. A standard curriculum is typically a focal point for the teaching and learning process: Teachers feel obligated to teach it, and students are held accountable for learning it. For most children with severe intellectual disabilities, it is usually unattainable. This means that mainstream teachers attempting to accommodate a wide diversity of students must orchestrate a greater number of activities and materials, substantially complicating their job. Further, these different activities and materials tend to separate students with and without disabilities, reducing the amount and quality of social interaction between them. In short, the standard curriculum is anathema to many inclusionists because it creates de facto segregation within the mainstream and requires considerably more planning, which, for some teachers, can become reason enough to turn their backs on the inclusion concept.

Knowledge for knowledge's sake, then, is devalued by many full inclusionists. Rather, learning how to learn, a "process approach" to education, is embraced enthusiastically. The following is taken from W. Stainback, S. Stainback, and Moravec (1992).

> From a holistic, constructivist perspective, all children simply engage in a process of learning as much as they can in a particular subject area; how much and exactly what they learn will depend upon their backgrounds, interests, and abilities. (p. 72)
>
> The teacher may share his or her knowledge of 'tricks of the trade' with students through 'mini-lessons' or by other means, but the focus is on facilitating students to become actively engaged in their own learning. The classroom is often filled with real-life, purposeful projects and

> activities. There is little focus on practicing skills such as punctuation, capitalization, or noun-verb identification in isolated ways -- these are learned in the context of writing activities. (p. 70)
>
> There is little or no focus on remediating deficits and weaknesses -- these are addressed or compensated for as children become excited about learning and engage in real-life, purposeful projects and activities. (p. 70)

These descriptions have the same romantic appeal as Weber's (1971) and Featherstone's (1971) charming portraits of the British Infant Schools and Rathbone's (1971) descriptions of open education, an Amercian movement based on the British Infant Schools that both bloomed and withered in the early 1970s, thirsting for sufficient parent support and teacher training (see Myers, 1974). But, more important, the above descriptions reveal an offbeat view of schooling, an understanding of general education that clashes with what currently is being written and advocated by reformers, policymakers, and researchers.

Consider, for example, the oil-and-water mix of W. Stainback, S. Stainback, and Moravec's (1992) full-blown constructivism with Cooperative Integrated Reading and Composition (Stevens, Madden, Slavin, & Farnish, 1987) and Team-Assisted Individualization (Slavin, 1984), programs that claim a strong academic focus, are curriculum driven, and use explicit teaching strategies. The same may be said for Wang's ALEM and Reading Recovery (e.g., Pinnell, DeFord, & Lyons, 1988). It would seem that full inclusionists like the Stainbacks would reject the very approaches to reform that REI proponents championed. Judging from W. Stainback, S. Stainback, and Moravec's (1992) nonchalance toward students in academic difficulty (in their third passage), we would expect them also to reject the intensive remedial activity described

by Oakes and Lipton (1992) in successfully "detracked" schools, or schools that have eliminated (or nearly eliminated) grouping for instruction by ability:

> In some schools, students...having difficulty keeping up in heterogeneous academic classes are enrolled in a support or booster class where they receive additional instruction; in others, peer- or cross-age tutoring programs offer after-school help. Some schools make reading assignments available on cassette tapes so that less accomplished readers can participate fully. (pp. 450-451)

Finally, compare the devaluation of student and teacher accountability and, by implication, the deemphasis on academic standards, that suffuses the three passages from W. Stainback, S. Stainback, and Moravec with the following statements of two recent Secretaries of Education and the President of the American Federation of Teachers:

> We urgently need a nationwide system of assessment that covers every school district...in the U.S. The next President must rally parents, community leaders, the media, and corporate America...to bring all U.S. residents to a high level of literacy and of skilled and productive intelligences. (Bell, 1988, p. 10)
>
> The critical public mission in education is to set tough, clear standards of achievement and insure that those who educate our children are accountable for meeting them. (Lamar Alexander at the Republican National Convention, cited in The Chronicle of Higher Education, 1992, p. 33)
>
> [Education reform] includes defining what students should know and be able to do; assessments that tell us who is or isn't making it; and consequences. The last are designed to get students to work as hard as

> they do in other countries becasue they know something important -- like college admissions or access to a good job -- is at stake. (Shanker, 1993)

"All children." Why are at least some full inclusionists out of step with general education's steady drumbeat? Because as zealous advocates of children with severe intellectual disabilities, they march to a beat of their own. Despite their slogan of "all children," they are concerned primarily about their own children. Their plan for school reform is driven by the concern, "What type of school will be best for our children?" and by a related presumption that "What's best for our kids is good for all kids." The academic needs of low-, average-, and above-averaye-achieving students, as well as those with varying disabilities, typically are ignored.

Full inclusionists appear unmoved by the well-publicized statements of the Learning Disabilities Association (1993) and National Joint Committee on Learning Disabilities (1993), which claim that students with learning disabilities sometimes require an intensity and systematicity of instruction uncommon to general education classrooms. Nor are they swayed by advocates of children with hearing and visual impairments, many of whom fiercely support special schools on grounds that general education cannot be trusted always to provide specialized services to their children, and that it deprives many students of necessary cultural and socialization experiences (e.g., American Council on the Blind et al., n.d.; De Witt, 1991; National Council on Disability, 1989). There is an obvious inconsistency in the TASH leadership's apparent unresponsiveness to advocates of deaf and blind students. The leadership wants an end to the continuum of services primarily because it precludes desirable socialization experiences for students with severe intellectual disabilities. But the leadership turns its back on the very same

argument when used by advocates for those with hearing and visual impairments wishing to preserve the continuum.

TASH leaders' use of the term "all children," then, is presumptive and misleading. It is ironic, too, because, rhetoric aside, their goals and tactics reflect an exclusionary, not inclusionary, mindset: Their writings suggest little interest in others' points of view; manifest scant recognition that many special and general educators and administrators, as well as academics, have concerns about their positions (e.g., Coates, 1989; Houck & Rogers, 1993; Semmel, Abernathy, Butera, & Lesar, 1991); and generally give the impression that they see accommodation as a compromise of principles and a capitulation -- that only a purist's perspective is honorable and permissible. Full inclusionists' uncompromising romanticism, insularity, and willingness to speak for all is markedly different from REI supporters' pragmatism, big-tent philosophy, and reluctance to speak for all.

Impact on Special and General Education Reform

A success story? Our World Book Dictionary defines "radical" as "favoring extreme social changes or reforms." The TASH leadership has radicalized reform making in special education: Whereas the signature phrase of REI advocates was "cooperation between special and general education," the full inclusionist mantra is "eliminate special education." Despite their extremist position, and although small in number, full inclusionists are shaping special education policy and practice in a handful of state and local education agencies. Moreover, after ignoring special education for a decade or more, general education is giving evidence of listening finally, just in time to hear talk of dismantling the continuum and refashioning mainstream classes guided by constructivist blueprints unsubstantiated by research.

The power to influence must be heady stuff for the leaders of full

inclusion. Few, after all, can claim to inspire policy making in the states of Michigan and New Mexico, or see their ideas incorporated in a National Association of State Boards of Education white paper, or hear their movement celebrated during the nationally televised Academy Awards. The sun surely is shining on the current movers and shakers of special education reform. But if clear skies are overhead, black clouds laced with lightning are crowding for room on the horizon.

If the inclusionists adhere to their no-optional-placement strategy, opposition to their movement will become increasingly vocal, especially now that prominent professional and parent groups have produced position papers rejecting full inclusion and supporting the continuum of services. Likewise, if TASH leaders cling to a vision of regular education that emphasizes a radical constructivist approach to teaching and learning and that deemphasizes curriculum, academic standards, and student and teacher accountability, general education will lose interest in special education as a partner in reform making.

To the leaders of full inclusion we communicate the following message, which we suspect is on the tip of many tongues: For years now, we've been impressed by arguments for the inclusion of children with severe intellectual disabilities in regular schools and classrooms. Fix your attention on these children and permit the parents and professional advocates of children with severe behavior problems, hearing impairments, learning disabilities, and so forth to speak on behalf of the children <u>they</u> know best. Recognize that you're probably at the apex of your power. Use it to build bridges. Choose compromise over principles. By doing this, you will transform adversaries into allies willing to help you secure the full inclusion, not of all, but of those who are the touchstone of your work and dreams.

The new extremists. Will full inclusionists heed such advice? We hope so because, if not, their continued presumptive, provocative rhetoric will polarize a field already agitated. A troubling sign that special education is in the process of dividing into two opposite camps is the emergence of a new extremist group to which the full inclusionists inadvertantly gave life; namely, the reactionaries. The reactionary's belief in special education is like the chauvinist's belief in America in the late 1960s: "Love it or leave it!" Such blind faith champions the status quo and all but rules out thoughtful self-criticism that can lead to constructive adaptations. Lest readers think that this group is little more than feverish imagining, we suggest they speak to colleagues who listened to discussions on the floor of the Delegate Assembly at the Council for Exceptional Children's 1993 convention in San Antonio.

Special education has big problems, not least of which is that it must redefine its relationship with general education. Now is the time to hear from inventive pragmatists, not extremists on the right or left. Now is the time for leadership that recognizes the need for change, appreciates the importance of consensus building, looks at general education with a sense of what is possible, and respects special education's traditions and values and the law that undergirds them.

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